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Friday, 4 October 1996, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Razali Ismail ..... (Malaysia)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

The President: I call on the Chairman of the delegation of Zambia, Mr. Peter Kasanda.

Mr. Kasanda (Zambia): It is with great pleasure that I take this opportunity to warmly congratulate you on your unanimous election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-first regular session. Your election is a tribute not only to your country, Malaysia, but also to you personally. I am aware that you bring to the presidency of the General Assembly wide experience in the field of international relations, from which we stand to benefit immensely. I would also like to wish you every success in your important duties. I would further like to affirm the readiness of my delegation to cooperate with you in the discharge of your duties.

Allow me also to pay tribute to Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral of Portugal, who presided over the fiftieth regular session of the General Assembly with great skill and dedication. His presidency did indeed enhance the deliberative role of the General Assembly.

Furthermore, my delegation would like to record its appreciation for the work of our esteemed Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, carried out under trying conditions. Zambia greatly values the contribution of the Secretary-General to the reform process of the United Nations and can only hope that the entire membership will give him a second term in order for him to complete these reforms.

This session of the General Assembly is distinctive because it is being held in the aftermath of the historic fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, which we observed last year. It will be recalled that in observing and celebrating that important event, we made solemn commitments to steer the world body towards the progressive development of a world community that would be cooperating effectively in dealing with global problems in the interest of humanity. We also agreed that the United Nations should be more democratic, transparent and responsive and should be the common property of all the people of the world, in whose name it was created in the first place. We went on to state that we wanted all citizens of the world to have real ownership of the Organization. We also set for ourselves economic and social goals. In some cases, we went as far as to agree on specific time-bound targets by which progress would be measured. This session, therefore, marks the beginning of a process of fulfilling these solemn commitments that we made last year.

Crucial to fulfilling these commitments is the issue of the reform of the United Nations, which is now under way. Reform and continuous renewal are indispensable if the future of the Organization is to be secured. All of us have to play our part with the hope and determination necessary to carry forward the United Nations reform

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agenda with speed and thoroughness. In this way, we can work towards strengthening the Organization and make it serve humanity more effectively. It is my conviction that the United Nations can achieve greater success if we, the stakeholders, work towards creating a much improved Organization.

As the twenty-first century approaches, the greatest challenge facing the international community is to improve the living conditions of the majority of people. Every human being must have access to opportunities that afford a decent livelihood under conditions that are free from want, disease, hunger and ignorance. The World Summit for Social Development held in Copenhagen last year adopted a framework to deal with poverty and other social problems. Far too many people, especially women and children, are vulnerable to marginalization and deprivation. We need to invest more resources to end the conditions of endemic human deprivation existing in many parts of the world today.

There are several other areas where we need to improve the social conditions of life. The first ever World Congress on the Sexual Exploitation of Children, held in Stockholm, Sweden, in August this year, presented in graphic detail the atrocities being committed against children. Many young lives are being wasted in the huge, illegal international business of child prostitution and pornography. As a civilized world, we cannot allow lifestyles that are attuned to the sexual abuse of children. It is the hope of my delegation that all countries of the world will work expeditiously to implement the Agenda for Action adopted at the World Congress. In the same vein, the international community must continue to protect and promote the rights of the child by implementing the provisions of the Declaration and Programme of Action of the World Summit for Children.

The United Nations has also articulated various programmes aimed at the improvement of the status of women and youth. Commitments contained in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, as well as the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, require the devoted attention of the international community, especially with regard to empowerment strategies in the critical areas of employment, education, health and participation in societal decision-making. It is incumbent upon us all to honour the commitments we made in the declarations and the programmes of action. My country has committed itself to the attainment of the objectives contained in these documents. Women and children are invaluable resources that can be neglected only at the world's own peril.

It is fitting that we begin this session shortly after the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). Zambia supported the adoption of this Treaty because of our commitment to general and complete disarmament under effective international control. It is in the same spirit that my country signed the Pelindaba Treaty, establishing Africa as a nuclear-free zone, on 11 April this year. Zambia will be signing the CTBT with the hope that all other countries of the world will do so as well, in the spirit of the traditional recognition by the United Nations that disarmament is one of the priority questions of international relations. In this regard, Zambia would like to call on nuclear-weapon States to inject a new spirit of commitment to ensuring nuclear disarmament, in accordance with article 6 of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

In this connection, my delegation wishes to reiterate the conviction that the time has indeed come for the convening of another special session of the General Assembly, in 1999, devoted to disarmament. My delegation believes that such a session would offer additional possibilities for the international community to review, from a perspective more in tune with the current international situation, the most critical aspects of the process of disarmament in the post-cold-war era.

It is common knowledge that in most of today's conflicts the most widely used weapons are small arms and light weapons. None is more menacing than land-mines, the use of which is widespread. Currently more than 110 million of them are buried in various parts of the world, mostly in developing countries. The world cannot continue to lose human lives from these lethal weapons. In this regard, my delegation fully supports calls for the banning at the global level of the use, stockpiling, production and sale of anti-personnel land-mines for all time. Zambia will therefore support initiatives, during this session of the General Assembly, to effect such a global ban.

The issue of small arms and light weapons brings me to the question of conflicts in various parts of the world that our Organization has increasingly been called upon to resolve. The international community faces the challenge of bringing peace in countries where warring factions show, in some cases, irreconcilable ethnic differences and other forms of intolerance.

The African region has its sad share of these conflicts that have led to great loss of life, displacement of people and the disruption of vital economic activities. Burundi is one such major challenge. The measures to restore the parliament in Burundi and unban political parties, which were announced on 11 September by the military regime of Major Pierre Buyoya, are steps in the right direction. My delegation, however, wishes to underscore the point that changes of Government should occur only through constitutional and internationally accepted means. Therefore, unless and until a constitutional Government is established in Burundi, my Government will continue to withhold recognition of the Buyoya regime. The immediate action of the countries of the Great Lakes region to impose sanctions on Burundi following the *coup d'état* of 25 July 1996 deserves the commendation of the United Nations. There is no doubt that this action is what has forced the military Government in Burundi to restore the parliament and to unban political parties.

We are encouraged with regard to Rwanda by the fact that the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda has finally been established and that its work has started. It is vitally important that the perpetrators of genocide in Rwanda in 1994 should be brought to justice. This would serve as a deterrent to others who would otherwise be tempted to commit similar crimes. The re-emergence of genocide, war crimes and other crimes against humanity should be a source of great worry to the international community. Such crimes should not be allowed to continue, because they violate fundamental human rights and strike at the very foundation of the international legal system.

The Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) has done an admirable job of containing the situation in Liberia and preventing it from degenerating further. We are now seeing more promising steps towards the settlement of the conflict in Liberia. The gains achieved in Liberia can only be consolidated by the continued support of the international community for ECOMOG so that the timetable adopted at the recent Abuja summit can be effectively implemented.

The peace process in Angola is also on track, as evidenced by the quartering and disarmament, which are now almost complete after some extensions. The Assembly is also aware that only two days ago the situation in Angola was deliberated upon by Heads of State or Government of the Southern African Development Community in order to bring the leadership of the Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola-Partido Trabalhista (MPLA) and the União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (UNITA) together. Unfortunately, the UNITA leader, Mr. Jonas Savimbi failed to attend.

Efforts to bring peace to Angola will nevertheless continue. The regional summit on Angola demonstrated the strong commitment of the leaders of southern Africa to the resolution of the conflict in Angola. However, the international community needs to be continuously engaged in order to ensure that the situation is resolved. We urge that the integration of former UNITA guerrillas into the national army of Angola be speeded up to consolidate the peace process. Zambia would also like to urge Mr. Jonas Savimbi and other UNITA leaders to be more resolute in the implementation of the commitments they made in the Lusaka Protocol.

I wish to take this opportunity to commend the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Angola, Mr. Alioune Blondin Beye, for the good work he has done in the Angolan peace process. However, even when peace finally comes to Angola, it will be important for the international community to provide assistance to that country in areas that will facilitate rapid national reconstruction, such as mine clearance.

The issue of Western Sahara continues to be Africa's last unresolved colonial question. My delegation believes that it is not beyond the wisdom of this Assembly to overcome whatever obstacles may be standing in the way of a referendum. We would therefore like to appeal to the principal parties to cooperate with the Secretary-General in finding a lasting solution to this problem.

With regard to Somalia, my delegation is concerned at the apparent lack of efforts by the international community towards finding a lasting solution to the crisis in that country. The situation in Somalia is also not conducive to regional peace and security. We therefore call upon the international community to seek ways and means through appropriate organs to assist the people of Somalia to reach accommodation with each other, just as we call on the Somali factions themselves to work towards a genuine political settlement so that peace may return to that country.

The situation in the Middle East is a source of great danger to regional peace and security. We urge the parties to the conflict not to abandon but to consolidate the peace process brought about through sacrifice and painstaking work. The violent confrontation that has

taken place in the past three days is a matter of grave concern to us. Zambia still believes, however, that the parties will harness the moral courage and the political will that are necessary to return to the peace process. Zambia believes that for the peace process to restart and gain momentum, the new Government in Israel should respect and implement the agreements already reached on the Middle East peace process, in accordance with the norms of international law.

Since its inception, the United Nations has faced the challenge of facilitating effective international economic cooperation. However, we have yet to attain a satisfactory level where countries of the world can pursue prospects for development through the machinery of the Organization. Multilateralism is indispensable to the management of the process of the globalization of the world economy that is now going on. Major issues like foreign direct investment, currency stability, external debt problems, international trade and commodity price stabilization require durable multilateral cooperative arrangements.

It is the hope of my delegation that the current work taking place at the United Nations on an Agenda for Development, the strengthening of the United Nations and prospective new modalities for financing operational activities for development will generate possibilities to implement fully the provisions of Chapter IX of the Charter of the United Nations. It is also the hope of my delegation that the reform of the Bretton Woods institutions will not further erode the capacity of the United Nations to deal with economic questions.

It is, however, a matter of concern to my delegation that United Nations agencies and departments are facing budget cuts because of the continuing financial crisis of the world body. Our concern is heightened by the fact that in March this year, the United Nations embarked on a decade-long process of promoting African development through its System-wide Special Initiative for Africa. The United Nations, which is at the centre of the implementation of the Special Initiative, requires strong institutional capacities. The continuing financial crisis is certainly going to erode this institutional capacity further.

The Special Initiative and the Zambian economic reform programme complement each other. We hope that this is also the case with other African countries. We are also particularly happy that the Special Initiative gives prominence to peace-building, conflict resolution, national reconciliation and strengthening of the capacity for governance in the wide agenda of socio-economic development on the African continent. As is well known, economic progress in Africa has all too often been undermined by conflicts.

As the international community supports African development, we once again draw its attention to the burden of external debt that is stunting African development. Both the Special Initiative and the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s recognize that the major obstacle to sustained economic growth and development is the problem of external debt. It is the expectation of my delegation that deeper debt reduction going beyond the Naples terms can be agreed upon in the near future. Deep debt reduction will go a long way in facilitating domestic savings and investments in Africa, especially in the social sectors, and thereby reduce poverty, environmental degradation and dependency on aid.

Before I conclude, I should say a few words about the political situation in Zambia. In November 1991, my country embarked on a multi-party democratic process. We are almost at the end of the first five-year period of democratization. Zambia will hold presidential and parliamentary elections this year under conditions of firm political stability. We are determined to maintain this stability by ensuring that peace prevails throughout the election period. The Movement for Multiparty Democracy, which is currently running the Government, has been unequivocal in condemning all forms of political violence and intolerance.

There is no political crisis in Zambia. The people of Zambia have continued with their daily lives in peace, security and full confidence in the political process of the country. In order to demonstrate good faith in the conduct of the democratic process, the Government of Zambia has invited international observers to participate in monitoring our elections. These are in addition to local independent election monitors. It is our desire that as many observers as possible should participate in this process, which is aimed at consolidating democracy.

Zambia believes that the ideals of the United Nations are indispensable to the development of the partnership of countries. It is therefore the supreme duty of all of us to promote and uphold them. In this context, I would like to conclude by reaffirming the faith of my delegation in the ideals of the United Nations.

Address by Mr. Jules Albert Wijdenbosch, President of the Republic of Suriname

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Suriname.

Mr. Jules Albert Wijdenbosch, President of the Republic of Suriname, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Republic of Suriname, His Excellency Mr. Jules Albert Wijdenbosch, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Wijdenbosch: May I first join preceding speakers and congratulate you most sincerely, Sir, on behalf of the Government and the people of the Republic of Suriname on your unanimous election to the presidency of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. On behalf of my delegation, I pledge you our full support as you carry out the weighty and challenging responsibilities of your office. I also wish to pay tribute to Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral for the excellent and exemplary manner in which he presided over the fiftieth session of the General Assembly.

The dynamic and extraordinary manner in which Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali has accomplished his mission as Secretary-General in difficult circumstances of financial constraints and wars within and among Nations, and his fostering of social and economic development, has earned our sincere gratitude. My Government believes that notable endeavours have been undertaken by His Excellency Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali to shape the future of the United Nations in accordance with the needs and aspirations of today's world.

As members may know, the people of the Republic of Suriname, availing themselves of their fundamental democratic right through fair, free and secret elections on 23 May and 5 September 1996, have elected the new political leadership of the country. As testimony to this democratic process, I stand before the Assembly on behalf of my Government and people as the newly elected President of the Republic of Suriname.

My Government believes that the main challenge facing us is the difficult task of reversing the current tendency towards the social disintegration of the nation into a process of nation- building and creating social harmony. The need for this is even more pressing, considering that Suriname has a small population, composed of different ethnic and indigenous groups and that the living conditions of large segments of its population have deteriorated significantly. One of the fundamental problems in meeting this challenge lies in the development of an economy that is diversified and not dependent on just one economic sector — and even less, dependent on a single donor country.

In order to ensure that our people have the actual enjoyment of human rights in the widest sense of the word, a social system will be created that will focus attention on guaranteeing every citizen minimal social security; creating a society in which the quality of life is equal for all and harmony is safeguarded; offering Surinamese women greater opportunities to develop their potentialities and to participate in the social structures, as well as enhancing, in the widest sense of the word, the care for the Surinamese child; providing for the basic needs of the people, such as food supply, health care, education, housing, public transport, water supply, employment, passable roads and affordable energy supply; and guaranteeing the protection of property by means of adequate security.

The Government of Suriname is aware that the realization of these tasks will demand great efforts from the Government itself and from the entire population. In this endeavour we shall work to bring about the administrative and budgetary decentralization of the administration through the strengthening of people-oriented democracy by giving participatory democracy the scope to develop.

The decentralization of legislation and administration will be given further attention, to facilitate regional and local development, with the full participation of regional and local structures. The necessary conditions will be created for an integrated approach to the development of the districts and the interior, so as to eliminate development lag in these regions. We fully realize that the responsibility for achieving this goal lies primarily with the Government and the people of Suriname. We acknowledge, however, that we live in a larger world, in a period in which having friendly relations is of eminent importance. In accordance with international law, and on the basis of the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of the Non-Aligned Movement, Suriname will establish and maintain relations with friendly nations and international and regional organizations throughout the world.

Close relations with countries that are our neighbours from a historical, cultural or geographical point of view, especially France, Brazil and Guyana, and with Venezuela, the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the United States of America, will be maintained and deepened.

Furthermore, we will strengthen our efforts for full integration into the subregion, into the wider Caribbean region and into the Americas through our membership in the Caribbean Community and the Association of Caribbean States and through our participation in the free-trade zone to be established in the year 2005.

This approach demands a more business-like stance in multilateral and bilateral relations as concerns the principles of equality, mutual respect, and the interest and protection of our national sovereignty.

One of the most important characteristics of our era is the transitional phase we are going through, in which new ideas, new Powers, new values and norms have arisen, leaving their mark on both national and international politics, on the national and international economy, and on the formation and content of international relations. The United Nations, which plays a crucial role in defining international relations and creating favourable conditions for peace, stability and development, reflects this transitional process.

In considering the need to redefine the role and tasks of the United Nations in the post-cold-war era, some people question whether the United Nations still has a role to play in the international arena. As far as Suriname is concerned, the United Nations, as a centre of multilateral relations, has demonstrated its ability to play a unique role in the achievement of overall human development on a global scale. The United Nations has also demonstrated an extraordinary capacity for giving primacy to the ideals and aspirations enshrined in its Charter, and has indeed proved to be effective in the pursuit of such essential tasks as the maintenance of peace and security and the promotion of development.

Along these lines, we would like to emphasize that the continuation of the United Nations as a centre for multilateral discussion and action is indispensable. We acknowledge the need, however, to redefine its functions. First, there is a clear need to reform its bureaucratic structures in order to make it more effective and efficient and to bring it more in line with the aspirations of the majority of the world's population. Secondly, we must abide by our obligations under the Charter of the United Nations to provide the necessary funds for its proper functioning, even though a restructuring of the current scale of assessed contributions could be considered.

We believe that if the United Nations is considered as a train of peace and development on these two tracks, humankind will embrace our Organization, which will help us to move forward into the twenty-first century.

On the eve of the new millennium, it is imperative for the international community to seek solutions to pressing problems, of which abject poverty may well be the most compelling. The solemn commitments of the World Summit for Social Development and the launching of 1996 as the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty and the period 1997-2006 as the United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty have our full support. There is evidence the world over that continuing poverty, if not addressed adequately, will result in social disharmony and in economic and political disorder, and will become a threat to national and international peace and stability, thereby negatively affecting the growth and consolidation of democracy and human rights.

Mr. Mabilangan (Philippines), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Let it be understood that all efforts to combat the scourge of illicit drug trafficking, terrorism and organized crime will prove to be fruitless unless we present a united front to eradicate poverty.

Suriname has drawn unexpected international attention by its resolve to employ its timber resources for the development of its people. My Government is aware of the concern of the international community as to the possible consequences of an unsustainable use of our forest. There are many examples throughout the world on how we should not proceed, and we have learned from those experiences.

In order to strike a proper balance between our actual needs for development and the needs of future generations, the Government of Suriname will abide by the commitment expressed through its contribution at the Rio Conference in 1992 and to the subsequent investigations and deliberations at various levels of society in conjunction with foreign investors. In all these endeavours we will continue to be cautious, with due regard for the interests of potential investors, the interests of our indigenous people and the need to protect the interests of future generations.

We hope that the international community will also abide by its obligation to provide the necessary technological and financial assistance, thus contributing to the achievement of these goals. In this respect we look forward to the coming review meeting on the implementation of Agenda 21.

The Government of the Republic of Suriname is very concerned about the problem of illicit drug trafficking, because it poses special security problems for countries such as Suriname, which have insufficient resources to guard its hundreds of miles of shoreline and vast, underpopulated land areas. Therefore, as part of our policy of maximum cooperation in the fight against drugs, we have entered into cooperation agreements with many countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, especially with those States adjacent to Suriname. In this context, I should like to mention the recently established and much appreciated cooperation between Surinamese police authorities and the drug enforcement agencies of the Government of the United States of America. However, finding an adequate solution to the drug problem will depend in no small measure on whether equal attention is given to both the supply and the demand sides of this phenomenon.

While reflecting on the issues facing our world and amidst the many challenges to creating global solidarity, my Government wishes to express its serious concerns over the developments in the Middle East, which have resulted in a virtual discontinuation of the historic peace process. We hope that the parties concerned and the international community will succeed in bringing the peace process back on track. The agony of bloodshed and the loss of lives must be avoided, and there are no alternatives to dialogue and peace.

I am deeply honoured to have had the opportunity to address this body on a number of issues that are of prime importance to the Government and the people of the Republic of Suriname. I would like to conclude by reiterating our commitment to contribute to the creation of a new world order characterized by the eradication of poverty and based on a more just distribution of wealth and on an atmosphere that augurs well for peace and global improvement of the quality of life on this beautiful planet.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Suriname for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Jules Albert Wijdenbosch, President of the Republic of Suriname, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: I now call on the Chairman of the delegation of Panama and former President of the General Assembly, His Excellency Mr. Jorge Illueca.

Mr. Illueca (Panama) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The delegation of Panama wishes to join in the very warm congratulations that the President has already received from the speakers who have preceded me. His well-deserved election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session attests to his skills and personal merits, and at the same time reflects the esteem that Malaysia, a prominent member of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) has come to enjoy in the family of nations.

I am also very pleased that this particular part of our meeting is being chaired by our colleague from the Philippines, Ambassador Mabilangan.

Allow me on this solemn occasion to pay tribute to the eminent Portuguese statesman Diogo Freitas do Amaral, who presided over the historic fiftieth session with great wisdom, poise and humanism and shed his particular light on the institutional reform of the United Nations.

At the fiftieth session of the General Assembly Panama proposed, together with the United States and France, that the United Nations and interested countries should take a decisive part in the holding of the Universal Congress on the Panama Canal, which will take place in September 1997. On that occasion the Assembly adopted resolution 50/12 (1995), which in its operative part,

> "Urges the competent organs, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations system, in particular, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme and the International Maritime Organization, to study the possibility of providing assistance from within existing resources for the organization of the Universal Congress on the Panama Canal". (resolution 50/12, para. 3)

In the first operative paragraph the Assembly noted that it

"Supports the initiative of the Government of Panama in convening the Universal Congress on the Panama Canal, with the participation of Governments, international bodies, public and private academic institutions, maritime users and international shipping companies, to examine jointly the role which the Panama Canal should play in the twenty-first century". (Ibid., para. 1)

The Government of Panama has a particular interest in seeing that Member States of the United Nations, as well as intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations of the international community, are informed about how Panama, as a sovereign State, is preparing to take on all the responsibilities stemming from the final transfer of the interoceanic canal in 1999, pursuant to the provisions of the Torrijos-Carter Treaties.

One calendar year from the holding of the Congress, I wish to inform the General Assembly that the Panamanian Government is hard at work on preparations and stepping up consultations with international organizations and friendly countries in order to secure meaningful participation. The Panama Canal Congress will be universal in terms of participation; it will also be universal because Panama, with its universalist and Bolivarian traditions, takes the view that international maritime transport should be open uninterruptedly to all the flags of the world on an equal footing and under a neutral and universal regime that obliges us all to ensure its peaceful use and transit, taking into account the expansion of international trade and the growth of the world economy.

Ours is a time in which nations appear to be closer than ever and in which there are tremendous opportunities to improve the living conditions of all. At the same time, the existence of numerous imbalances, obstacles, risks and dangers gives Governments and peoples grounds for concern.

It is not only remarkable achievements of science, technology and trade that are being globalized; unfortunately, hunger and environmental degradation are also being globalized. There are still national and international situations that are marked by the denial of fundamental values and that affect human rights and the freedom of peoples. There are growing inequalities between members of our societies and between nations, and certain injustices still persist in some aspects of international relations. Arms trafficking and overt or covert resistance to agreements and initiatives to reverse the arms race are signs that attitudes of expediency are prevailing, to the detriment of our hopes for peace and agreement and our aspirations to sustainable development. Terrorism, organized crime and transnational crime conspire and feed off one another on an unprecedented international scale, exploiting the many faces of drug use, which is a threat to all mankind.

These concerns dominated the agenda of the Rio Group at its tenth summit, held a month ago in Cochabamba, Bolivia. It was an opportunity to underscore at the highest possible political level the serious challenges facing Latin America and the Caribbean, whose average poverty levels have reached alarming levels despite the tremendous efforts of our Governments to reduce them.

At that meeting the Panamanian Government stated — and I reaffirm here in this forum — that poverty and corruption are powerful forces threatening the democracies of the continent. On that occasion, the President of Panama, Mr. Ernesto Pérez Balladares, stated:

"When Nations embark on political adventures divorced from institutionality, they do not do so because they reject in theory the benefits of democracy, but because they associate their own despair with the regime under which they live ... For this reason, until the new concepts governing economic relations among countries today and democracy throughout the continent are accompanied by investment in social sectors and a genuine modernization of education to help close the gap, the sectors of the population affected by poverty will ultimately reject what we here today quite rightly think should be permanent values of modern societies."

For this reason, we wish to reiterate our understanding of and solidarity with the problems of hunger and poverty suffered by countries in other regions, in particular the least developed countries, the majority of which are in Africa, and certain countries in our region that are particularly vulnerable. Whatever may be the standpoint chosen for consideration of the great issues contained on the agenda of this fifty-first session of the General Assembly, we should always approach them with the desire to respond appropriately.

The organization of social life always presupposes normative vision and action. The United Nations has proved its capacity to propose to the international

community a body of norms whose effectiveness depends on their universal application. The fundamental debate that has been going on in the area of human rights since the creation of the United Nations has resulted in the enshrinement of those rights in legally binding texts and in declarations and programmes of action stemming from the major conferences held by the United Nations in recent years. We are encouraged by the fact that that enshrinement is encompassing the rights of solidarity in the context of problems concerning the environment, population, society, women's issues and housing.

The Government of Panama is mindful of the complex dialectic interactions between peace, human rights and development. The desire to ensure effective democratization in national life and to foster development is at the core of the activities the Panamanian Government is carrying out to benefit children, young people, women, indigenous and rural populations, the disabled and certain particularly disadvantaged urban groups.

The Government's activities relating to fulfilment of the Platform for Action adopted at the Beijing Conference on Women represent commitments strengthened by our justifiable satisfaction over Panama's fairly encouraging indicators regarding the advancement of women. The accent is currently being placed on the sector of the female population living in unfavourable conditions of health, housing and education and having little participation in political life.

In the context of this constantly renewed effort to find the best solutions to national problems, the delegation of Panama wishes to express to the Secretary-General our thanks and recognition for the cooperation activities that have been carried out in Panama by the United Nations Development Programme, as a recognized and neutral facilitator, to promote national consensus on the Panama Canal issues. The successes already achieved in this area demonstrate that the actions of the United Nations its system in Panama are effective and have an impact on the life of the nation.

Three months ago Panama ratified the Convention on the Law of the Sea, the implementation of which has become more effective since the establishment of the International Seabed Authority and the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea. Panama, as a maritime country, welcomes these promising developments and hopes that there will be further achievements in the application of the Convention.

The Government of Panama has great expectations for its future participation as a member of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme and in the Commission on Sustainable Development. We will strive to make our contribution and to prove our commitment to overcoming environmental problems. The strategic importance of issues associated with biodiversity is such that my Government hopes that new and additional funds will be made available to promote activities in this field. We have the same hope in connection with climate change, the ozone layer, desertification and the conservation of forests.

In the area of international peace and security, we reconfirm our agreement with those Governments that advocate a total ban on the production, use, trafficking in and transfer of anti-personnel land-mines. With respect to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which has been signed by Panama, we continue to hold the same view as in previous years. In this respect, we welcome Brazil's initiative to make the southern hemisphere a zone free of nuclear weapons. This estimable initiative adds to the efforts of Latin America and the Caribbean to foster a world free of nuclear weapons, efforts that were launched with the signing and ratification of the Tlatelolco Treaty.

Upon learning of the response of the International Court of Justice to the request issued by the General Assembly at its forty-ninth session, my Government welcomed the backing given by that principal organ of the United Nations to the negotiations on a ban on nuclear weapons, including tests. We signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty on the understanding that implicit in it is a commitment on the part of world Powers to achieve a nuclear-weapon-free world.

Panama has always supported those who believe that if a part of the funds absorbed by the arms industry could be made available to combat poverty, ignorance and disease, there would be positive changes all over the face of our Earth.

Panama has already expressed in the United Nations its position and views on the problem of drugs, most recently at the high-level segment of the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council in June. We would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm our support of Mexico's initiative, co-sponsored by the Rio Group, on convening a special session of the General Assembly in 1998, which would offer an opportunity to

update the various debates, concepts, approaches and consensus positions on the issue of illicit drugs and related crimes. The Government of Panama has made significant progress in developing the proposal presented to the Rio Group to create a multilateral centre in Panama to combat drug trafficking and related crimes.

We are glad to announce the recent holding in our country of the first international talks on the creation of that centre, attended by Bolivia, Ecuador, Colombia, Mexico, Peru, Venezuela and Panama. We agreed at that meeting to hold another meeting in December 1996 to take decisions on the training module included in the plans for the multilateral training and research institute to combat drug trafficking and related crimes. Another meeting will take place early in 1997 to study and decide upon the operational module as a means of combatting drug trafficking and related crimes, which is essentially civilian in nature and cooperating with the military forces that will lend additional support.

In a similar vein, the Panamanian Government also lends its support and solidarity to the international community's struggle to combat terrorism. Terrorist activity, no matter what the reasoning behind it may be, is criminal and immoral, and exceeds all limits. Its sole face is that of fanaticism. Terrorism is the offspring of the apocalypse, nihilistic and gratuitous in nature, capable of crushing human freedom and claiming a terrible harvest of innocent lives.

Other topics on the agenda of this session of the General Assembly are of particular interest to the Government of Panama. Negotiations on establishing an Agenda for Development oblige us not only to talk about this but to act, prompted by the universal duty to cooperate which encompasses all individuals and all communities. The common undertaking of sustainable development should be carried out through shared responsibilities. For this reason, we welcome the decision taken by Member States to politically reactivate the Economic and Social Council. Now, what is needed is the political will to equip the United Nations with an Agenda for Development which will not limit development solely to its economic component: though that is necessary, it is not enough. Development should also provide the key part of common well-being and be placed at the service of purposes consciously accepted by all, purposes that will enrich the lives of all, purposes that will enhance the creative capacity of every individual and be securely grounded in a human dimension which implies faith in oneself and paves the way for progress.

Whatever approach is taken in addressing the major issues on the agenda of this fifty-first session of the General Assembly, the human being, his hopes and sufferings and the obstacles and opportunities he faces to improve the quality of his life, should always have precedence. In spite of the dazzling clarity with which we perceive this certainty, it would seem that we sometimes lose sight of the fact that the human individual is the ultimate focus of this Organization and of all the agreements and plans of actions that we arrive at within it and stemming from it. All our decisions should be designed to meet the demands, needs, requirements and interests of human beings.

This requires a revitalization of the ethical side of the United Nations. My delegation appreciates the endeavours of the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali. He has placed his unquestioned talent and efforts at the service of the Organization. His unswerving internationalism and his commitment to world peace and development mean that Panama takes great pleasure in expressing its gratitude for his work.

A year ago we were welcoming the effort made by two great men who were struggling tirelessly to consolidate peace agreements and move towards peaceful coexistence in the Middle East. Today one of those men is no longer with us. Panama wishes to express a posthumous tribute of recognition to Yitzhak Rabin, a martyr of the peace process between two peoples, Palestine and Israel, with which our people and our Government have deeply-rooted friendly relations because the children of those peoples live together on our soil and are helping us to build a better country. Now that fratricidal struggle is casting both nations into mourning, Panama reaffirms its support for all the initiatives and resolutions that will strengthen peace and promote tolerance.

We are very concerned about the events which took place as a result of changes effected in the Holy Sites of Jerusalem, to which the Security Council referred in its resolution 1073 (1996) on Saturday, 28 September 1996. The Security Council called for an immediate cessation and reversal of all acts that had resulted in the aggravation of the situation and that had negative implications for the Middle East peace process. It likewise called for the safety and protection of the Palestinian civilians to be ensured. Finally, it called for the immediate resumption of negotiations within the Middle East peace process on its agreed basis and the timely implementation of the agreements reached.

Another matter of concern to us relates to the Chinese people, a people with which Panama has maintained relations since very early in the last century. My country has benefitted from a continued migration which, from the building of the interoceanic railway to that of the Canal, has contributed to our development and to the fashioning of our national identity. This deep-rooted and lasting relationship with the Chinese people has strengthened our nation's and our Governments' support for the principle of the universality of the United Nations. Panama maintains diplomatic relations with the Republic of China and feels bound to state that those relations have been fruitful and beneficial. They have always been characterized by respect and have been receptive to and incorporated the interests and needs of both sides. For this reason, we feel that our relations are exemplary in the best possible sense.

On the other hand, in a few years' time Panama will assume full responsibility for the interoceanic Canal and, in the context of that responsibility, Panama must acknowledge that the People's Republic of China is one of the main users of the waterway both in terms of the number of vessels and in terms of the volume of cargo originating in or destined for the People's Republic of China. We are encouraged by the fact that a significant number of Chinese citizens and companies on both sides of the Taiwan Strait live and work in harmony in Panama, where they have won the respect and affection of Panamanians because of their diligent hard work. We are convinced of the validity of the principle of one China, and we reaffirm our support for the efforts of both parties to unify the Chinese people. We reiterate our conviction that they will achieve that purpose in a framework of mutual respect that gradually helps to build trust between the two parties and create a favourable environment for Chinese reunification.

The question of Security Council reform, the increase in the number of its members and other related matters is of irrefutable importance for the United Nations, as is the question of the strengthening of the role of the United Nations. It is unacceptable to try to change the membership of the Security Council solely on the basis of supposed essential features that make certain countries more suitable than others to join decision-making organs and hold seats in the Security Council. Because of the functions it performs, today's state of affairs and a moral commitment to the future of the United Nations, we call for a reform of the Security Council that will provide regional representation, an increase in both membership categories — permanent and non-permanent — and equitable distribution.

The Government of Panama regards the Italian proposal as a democratic approach that responds to the concern for representativity. We were encouraged by the willingness to negotiate, with a view to achieving consensus, voiced by the Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs last week from this rostrum. In the issues of Security Council reform and the strengthening of the role of the United Nations, the best possible ideas and loftiest purposes should come into play. We wish to see a better, more effective and more representative Security Council. We would also like to see opportunities to participate in the United Nations go hand in hand with the responsibility to act to ensure international peace and security and for these to be seen from the perspective of their relationships with democracy and development. The Panamanian Government has decided to reaffirm its support for Japan and Germany having permanent seats on the Security Council.

I could not conclude without fulfilling my duty as a Panamanian to reiterate before this world Organization that Panama is ready to assume sovereign control over the Panama Canal in 1999, with all the administrative, operational and security responsibilities entailed in the full implementation of the Torrijos-Carter Treaties. Panamanians' shouldering of the main responsibility for the Panama Canal will coincide with the advent of the twenty-first century. We shall march resolutely into the new millennium, looking forward to a promising future in which it will become clear that Panama's universalist vocation has never wavered, and we strongly reaffirm that vocation.

Panama's universalism, I am proud to say, is an ethical one, capable of absorbing the most diverse currents of thought and human action, whether from the North, South, East or West. Our geography made us this way, and our history opened us up to the world — obviously, commercially, but above all culturally.

As of 31 December 1999 Panama will be better integrated in the world because it will be able to make free use of its entire territory for the integration of its nation. We shall then have to cope with the tremendous need to make full use of our potential and abilities and to fully exercise our rights and fulfil our responsibilities. On 31 December 1999 the Panamanian nation will be at the centre of an excitement sparked by the joining in our veins and souls, of the past and the future, of the struggles of generations, of joy and suffering and of the many endeavours that all bear the same name, a name

that designates a common objective, a single mission that many times engendered fervour and even heroism.

In the twenty-first century, Panama will still be a small country. What will be different, I repeat, is the full integration of the Panamanian nation in its territory, the simple but intense and far-reaching meeting of a nation with the entirety of its territory. The existence of an interoceanic waterway, the Panama Canal, in that territory will prompt us to pursue, step up and deepen our efforts to establish the right approaches and institutions to complete our sovereign life as a nation and to facilitate the fulfilment of our universalist vocation. That universalism will make it possible for us to continue to participate in the realities of a globalized and interdependent world with the desire to make it a source of mutual enrichment, openness, initiative and creativity.

It is a fortunate historical coincidence that on Wednesday of this week, 2 October 1996, the General Council of the World Trade Organization (WTO) decided to accept the report of its subsidiary organ concerning Panama's accession, thus ensuring its entry as a full member of the World Trade Organization. We welcome the fact that, with the accession of Panama, all countries in the Latin American region have become members of the WTO.

We all aspire to see a United Nations that will be ready to deal with present and future problems. Panama hopes to contribute to the vital consensuses and aspires to become part of the necessary renewal of the United Nations. As part of the Panamanian experience since the creation of the United Nations, I personally have taken part in the Organization's intergovernmental machinery often enough to be able to speak of faith. With faith in the United Nations, we have often been capable of moving mountains of mistrust and misunderstanding, which have covered the world in a landscape of conflict and deadlock. Thanks to that faith in the United Nations, today we can speak of new generations of human rights and new generations of peacekeeping operations, which, in the view of men and women of my generation are proof that the United Nations represents a victory over the erosive effects of time and history.

My delegation believes that the United Nations has accomplished wonderful tasks through its constructive consideration of various manifestations of human diversity and through the taking of decisions that give them a productive, secure and peaceful place on Earth.

The Acting President: The next speaker is His Excellency Mr. Poseci Bune, Chairman of the delegation of Fiji, upon whom I now call.

Mr. Bune (Fiji): My delegation joins others in warmly congratulating Ambassador Razali Ismail on his election to the presidency of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. His election is indeed, and in fact, a tribute both to him and to his great country, Malaysia. I would assure him of my delegation's full cooperation during his tenure of office.

It also gives me great pleasure to extend the profound gratitude of my delegation to the outgoing President of the historic fiftieth session of the General Assembly, Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral of Portugal, who presided over the session with such great skill, dexterity and expertise.

Lasting peace and security on our planet are the very cornerstones of progress and prosperity in our nation States. They are the cornerstones of accelerated development, to which we all, developing and least developed countries, aspire.

Mankind has fervently sought to live in peace and security throughout the ages, but lasting peace and security in our world have been very elusive, particularly during this century. In the early part of this century, we became embroiled in the First World War. We all thought that that was the war to end all wars, and then came the Second World War, two decades later. It was the worst destructive war of our times, and it left many challenges to peace and security in its wake.

The end of the war saw our world bipolarized and busy with the pursuit of spheres of influence by the two super-Powers, which culminated in a new era, the cold-war era. Prospects for peace and security in our world faded as the super-Powers and other major Powers began a race for the production and stockpiling of new weapons of war and mass destruction.

The world entered a new phase, the nuclear age, when several Powers began to develop, test and produce nuclear weapons. The testing of those weapons to make them even more powerful took place in many parts of the world, including my country's own region in the South Pacific. In such a milieu, peace and security became a constant prayer but a distant hope, as many of us in the non-nuclear world were filled with foreboding that our world was on the brink of nuclear extinction.

In such a horrific scenario, common sense began to prevail, and that common sense, buoyed by the initiatives of this important Organization, the United Nations, led to the conclusion of several important but limited treaties and to the Conference on Disarmament. Those initiatives were ultimately crowned with success when, on 10 September 1996, in an extended fiftieth session of the United Nations General Assembly, the vast majority of the world's nations adopted the text of a Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the CTBT.

In the context of the South Pacific region, with the adoption of the CTBT, the signature by the United States of America, the United Kingdom and France of the Protocols to the South Pacific Nuclear-Free-Zone Treaty — the Treaty of Rarotonga — and the ratification by France of the Protocols, my country and the countries of the region can breathe a sigh of relief at the cessation of the assault on our environment. Now our Governments can focus on the economic and social utilization of our natural resources to improve and increase the standard of living of our peoples without having to worry as much as we have in the past about the effects nuclear testing was having on the health of our people and the environment of the region. To further enhance this positive and welcome development, we urge the United States and the United Kingdom to ratify the Protocols to the South Pacific Nuclear-Free-Zone Treaty.

My country hails the adoption of the CTBT as one of the greatest achievements of the international community this century. It represents an imposing foundation for the establishment of lasting peace and security in our world.

The CTBT may not be the paragon of virtue most of us probably expected it to be. It is, nevertheless, a bold and constructive initiative that is meaningful and at the same time a reassurance of our survival of the nuclear menace. All of us must take the responsibility of assuring the success of the Treaty. My country calls on all nations of the world, in the interest of lasting peace and security on our planet and in the interest of all mankind, to sign and ratify the CTBT. Fiji signed the CTBT the day it was opened for signature. My Government has already decided to ratify it.

In the final analysis, we do not see the adoption of the CTBT as the final nail in the coffin of nuclear weapons. To achieve our ultimate and pre-eminent aim and our desire for lasting peace and security in our world, my country would like to see the CTBT as merely the first step towards an end to the production of all nuclear weapons, an end to the stockpiling of all nuclear weapons, the ultimate destruction of all nuclear weapons, the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free world and general disarmament as a whole.

Today, while we rejoice with a degree of relief at the adoption and signing of the CTBT, it is at the same time also incumbent upon us not to relax our vigilance with regard to the moves and proposals in certain quarters to import and dump nuclear waste and other forms of hazardous waste in our region. I refer specifically to reported plans afoot by certain unscrupulous nuclear-waste dealers to use the Palmyra Islands and certain other sites in the Pacific as permanent disposal facilities for nuclear waste.

My country wishes to make it clear to all concerned that we in the Pacific region will not sit idly by and allow any further reckless and mindless destruction of our environment and detriment to the health of our people through any form of nuclear contamination.

The stark reality of international affairs in our world today is that total nuclear disarmament and general disarmament, or even accelerated movement towards those goals, will not end tensions and conflicts and threats to peace. Even when weapons were made of stone, tensions, threats to peace and conflicts existed. And when we look at the events that are happening at present in a number of countries around us, my country recognizes, and I am sure we all do, that we must create in our international life a system of preventive diplomacy that can respond promptly, positively, peacefully and effectively to potential conflicts and threats of genocide, and de-escalate internal tensions and threats to internal and regional peace. My country wishes to recall its recommendation to the fiftieth session of the General Assembly that earnest and urgent action should be taken to set up a special United Nations department or unit to pursue preventive diplomacy in conflict prevention and conflict resolution. The department, in collaboration with competent countries and authorities, should have the capacity to receive, collate, analyse and interpret intelligence information and reports with a view to early detection of potential conflicts and early reaction to contain, minimize and resolve such conflicts in collaboration with relevant Member States. We should take every step within our power to prevent fires rather than having to put them out, to save lives rather than having to condemn the loss of lives.

Accordingly, my country welcomes the offer made by Norway in the General Assembly to establish a fund for preventive action at the United Nations and that country's pledge to provide some financial contribution to the fund annually.

In our efforts to promote, establish and maintain peace and security in our world, it is incumbent upon us to recognize and realize that security has several dimensions, not the least of which is economic security.

Sluggish economic development and limited development growth have affected developing countries and in particular, small island States, threatening national regional stability in one way or another. My country therefore calls on the international community, first, to increase official development assistance and to improve the quality of such assistance to developing countries; secondly, to cooperate in the creation of a more equitable international economic environment and thereby help to promote sustained economic growth and sustainable development, and at the same time, help to eradicate poverty; thirdly, to dismantle trade barriers and restrictions to market access; fourthly, to improve the access of developing countries to capital from international financial institutions and commercial sources; and lastly, to facilitate and assist the flow of investment capital and appropriate technologies to developing countries.

We have noted with concern that donor countries have failed to comply with the internationally agreed targets of official development assistance and commitments for new and additional resources. There is urgent need for a substantial expansion of official development assistance and for qualitative improvements in official development assistance by donor countries through a reduced cost of repayment. In fact, my country has noted with deep regret that while some developed countries have been making efforts to meet the official development assistance level, such assistance from some rich countries has been declining noticeably, and the decline has been taking place in the post-cold-war era, when it was to be expected that such countries were in a better position to increase the flow of official development assistance as a result of greater stability in the world and reduced tensions between former antagonists. In fact, in the case of a few traditional donors, aid has almost completely dried up. In some cases, aid is being systematically reduced. It appears that our region is no longer a strategic area for competition by the former cold-war antagonists to gain our favour.

My country is concerned to see the recent trend in some countries to seek to impose alien norms on countries with a unique, traditional and customary nature of society, especially indigenous societies. On the other hand, with respect to Japan and some South-East Asian countries such as Malaysia, development assistance is provided with no intention of interfering in their internal affairs.

International cooperation for development lies at the very heart of improving the living conditions of the great majority of people in our world who live in developing and least developed countries. My country fully supports an Agenda for Development, which is aimed at restoring the imperative of development as a central concern. Such an agenda should contain specific, concrete and pragmatic proposals that could be translated into action programmes and implemented on the basis of global priorities.

The Agreement amending the fourth Lomé Convention between the countries of Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific and the European Community, signed in Mauritius on 4 November 1995, includes a Second Financial Protocol that ensures that the European Development Fund will be available for development projects in African, Caribbean and Pacific countries up to the end of February 2000. This commitment by the European Union is a direct endorsement of a multilateral accord and a North-South development instrument that has worked and that has been widely acclaimed throughout the world. Many critics are predicting the end of Lomé by the year 2000. However, within the Community itself, and within the 70 African, Caribbean and Pacific States, the idea of a successor agreement to Lomé IV is a *fait accompli*. That in itself is a firm and unambiguous recognition of the dire need for such an instrument beyond the year 2000.

It is therefore our — and indeed everyone's — responsibility to protect and defend the principles and philosophy behind an accord such as the Lomé Convention. Those who are carried along by the liberalization of the so-called winds of change that are sweeping through the continents must realize that parts of our international community will still require preferential arrangements in the interest of economic and political parity and of equity, peace and stability in the world.

It is sad to note that the developed countries have so far failed to fulfil their commitments to provide new and additional financial resources and technology transfer to the developing countries on favourable terms. The

implementation of such commitments is most necessary for international economic cooperation, as is meaningful and effective follow-up to major conferences.

My country calls for the prompt and full implementation of the commitments and recommendations of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), which are more relevant today than ever before. We believe that under UNCED developing countries should have the right to benefit fully from the utilization of their natural resources if they are to achieve sustained economic growth and maintain sustainable development.

We wish to highlight the continuing urgent need to promote and facilitate industrialization as an instrument to facilitate rapid economic and social development in developing countries, which will contribute to the elimination of poverty and the generation of productive employment. The strengthening of the industrial bases of developing and least developed countries should become an international imperative.

My country calls on the international community to ensure an open, rule-based, equitable, secure, non-discriminatory, transparent and predictable multilateral trading system with the aim of achieving the complete integration of the developing countries into the world economy and the new international trading system.

We call upon Member States to implement fully the commitments agreed to in the Final Act adopted by the World Trade Conference, which confers special and differential treatment on developing countries. We believe that the carefully balanced package of rights and obligations with respect to the World Trade Organization should be carefully preserved and that the essential priority should be the implementation and fulfilment of such rights and obligations and the adoption of measures to mitigate adverse consequences on the developing countries.

The present unfair trading system is stagnating the economies of small island States when the international community is committed to protecting them. Fiji has deregulated its economy and its trade system, but we are deterred in our efforts to gain access to the markets of some developed countries, which still retain regulatory barriers of one kind or other.

My country therefore warmly welcomes the statement by the British Foreign Minister in this Assembly that the developed world must demolish the barriers it still maintains against imports from the developing world and the concomitant commitment to bring a vision of global free trade to reality by the year 2020.

It is sad to note that the debt crisis persists as one of the main constraints to development in developing countries. We wish to stress the urgent need for the international community, particularly donor countries and international financial institutions, to adopt an effective, comprehensive and equitable development-oriented and durable solution to the debt problem of developing countries.

My country strongly supports the World Food Summit to be held at Rome next month. It is the first time that world leaders will meet to debate and renew a commitment to eradicate hunger and malnutrition and to address the issues of food security for all peoples through the adoption of policies and actions at the national, subregional, regional and international levels.

As we pursue initiatives on several fronts to promote and facilitate lasting peace and security in our world, we have to be mindful of areas of tension that exist concurrently.

The Washington Middle East peace summit has come and gone, but at least it succeeded in bringing together the leader of Israel and the Palestinian leader in dialogue and discussion. We urge the parties to pursue in a meaningful way the initiative set in motion by the Washington summit. We also urge continued restraint by all. Killing and lamentations may have become an established way of life in the region, but peace and peaceful coexistence are the only civilized way towards progress and prosperity for all. We call upon the parties to undertake genuine and constructive action to negotiate, achieve and maintain a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

The Dayton accords succeeded in bringing a halt to armed hostilities in war-torn Bosnia. General elections have been held, but the situation remains fragile and the conclusion is inescapable that the international peacekeeping presence in Bosnia should remain for some time to come to consolidate the gains that have been achieved so far.

Recent events in Cyprus have reminded us that the tense situation in that country persists, and my country continues to urge all parties to accelerate the pace of the

negotiations in the interest of finding a constructive, just and lasting solution as early as possible.

Recent events in the Straits of Taiwan have highlighted the tension that exists in that region of the world, a region which is otherwise currently witnessing a most dynamic economic growth. Both the People's Republic of China and Taiwan, which are also active participants in post-forum dialogue with the island countries of the South Pacific Forum, contribute significantly to the development of the South Pacific region. My country welcomes the spirit of cooperation between Taiwan and the People's Republic of China and encourages the continuation of such dialogue and cooperation.

The genocide in Rwanda and Burundi imposes an obligation on our community of nations to pursue every possible initiative to prevent tragedies of such magnitude and to avoid a recurrence whenever and wherever they occur, and not on a selective basis or to serve the self-interest of one or another major Power. The conclusion is inescapable that such problems should not be left entirely to regional organizations to resolve, since they may have neither the capacity nor the resources to deal effectively with the situation.

My county condemns international terrorism and will fully support all international efforts and measures to eliminate international terrorism. We will also support initiatives to negotiate an international agreement to ban the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel mines.

We fully support international efforts in crime prevention and criminal justice and are fully appreciative of the preparatory work being done on the establishment of an international criminal court.

My country would like to reemphasize its strong view that the question of the protection and security of small States should remain a central concern of the United Nations. For as long as drug traffickers, international arms dealers, money launderers and international white-collar criminals continue their criminal activities, and as long as mercenaries and terrorists exist, small States will remain vulnerable to acts of aggression from without as well as from within. Small States especially look to the provisions of the United Nations Charter for the respect and preservation of their sovereignty.

My country continues to urge all parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to move speedily towards the conclusion of an effective protocol that would ultimately bring about improvements in the global climate system. My country is one of the many that is vulnerable to rising sea levels, hurricanes and other phenomena associated with disastrous climate changes. Our physical survival could be affected if immediate action is not taken to address the problem of climate changes in our world. The meeting of the South Pacific Forum held in the Marshall Islands from 3 to 5 September this year highlighted the Forum's concern that climate change has become a crucial issue within the region. It called — and we share that call — for urgent action, particularly in view of the second assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which stated that the balance of scientific evidence suggested a discernible human influence on the global climate. The Forum welcomed the outcome of the second session of the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change and called for acceleration of negotiations on the text of a legally binding protocol or another legal instrument to be completed in time for adoption at the third session of the Conference of Parties in order to achieve significant progress towards the goal of lower greenhouse-gas emissions.

The South Pacific Forum also called upon all countries to support the activities of the Ad Hoc Group on the Berlin Mandate and reaffirmed its support for the inclusion of the draft protocol presented by the Alliance of Small Island States for consideration in the negotiating process.

My country warmly welcomes the recent establishment of the International Seabed Authority and the election of the judges of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea. These new developments, together with the successful completion last year of the United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks, will maintain the momentum in the implementation of the Law of the Sea Convention. In particular, we support the promotion of the regime for the sustainable utilization of the living resources of the sea.

It is our sincere hope that the International Seabed Authority will administer the resources of the sea for the benefit of mankind. My country calls on the international community and the United Nations, in accordance with the decision of the General Assembly taken in July 1994 to provide adequate funding and adequate technical support to the International Seabed Authority so that it

can competently discharge in a most effective and efficient manner the responsibilities we gave it under the Convention. My delegation is pleased to be a sponsor of a draft resolution seeking the granting of observer status in the United Nations for the International Seabed Authority.

The United Nations has done a remarkable and excellent job in carrying out its mandates during the 51 years of its existence. It has played a significant, discernible and indispensable role in human affairs, from the peaceful resolution of conflicts and peacekeeping to economic development and social progress, from food and agriculture to employment and labour standards, from helping the children of our world to fostering human rights and justice. The international community is deeply indebted to the United Nations, which should continue to be a forum for multilateral cooperation and not an instrument that major Powers may use to serve their own national self-interests. My country acknowledges with profound gratitude the assistance and cooperation it has been receiving from the United Nations in its national and regional development efforts. Fiji continues to pledge its commitment to the United Nations and to what it stands for.

It is appropriate to observe, however, that in order to respond to the many demands of this complex world in which we all live, the United Nations has had to expand. Over a period of years, it has become very heavy, thereby greatly increasing the cost of its operation. The unhealthy state of United Nations finances does not derive, however, solely from the Organization's enhanced and expanding structure. It has also been exacerbated by the non-payment of dues and assessments. We call on all Member States that have not paid their dues or assessments and are in arrears to pay them promptly, fully and without conditions.

My country appreciates the steps taken this year by the United Nations administration to improve management, to make services more efficient and more effective and to cut costs. Notwithstanding the action that has been taken, my country believes that more can and should be done to make the Organization leaner and more streamlined and at the same time to reduce costs further. The various organs, agencies and departments of the United Nations need to be rationalized in line with the modalities of today's world, and structural changes and more personnel reforms must be instituted to make it more responsive to the constant demands of a continuously changing international community.

My country believes that the scale of assessments for the apportionment of expenses should be reassessed to make it more equitable and less burdensome for small island States.

My country believes that the time has come for the reform of the Security Council. We submit, as we did last year, that the organs of the United Nations should reflect changes in the global political landscape as well as the principles of geographic representation and equity. The Security Council should, in our view, be enlarged to accommodate the existing global political landscape.

Since peace and security underpin the very foundation of this Organization, my country fully supports the international peacekeeping missions of the United Nations. We are committed to the maintenance of international peace and security and, despite the fact that we are a small, developing island State with a small population, we have actively participated in the vast majority of United Nations peacekeeping missions. Fijian soldiers are serving in the Middle East with both the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon and the Multinational Force and Observers, as well as in Iraq and Kuwait. They have served in Afghanistan, Somalia and in Rwanda. Our policemen, too, have served in Angola, Cambodia, Namibia and Iraq, and are currently serving in Eastern Slavonia and in Croatia. Several of our men have lost their lives in the service of the international community and in the pursuit of peace and security in our world.

Peacekeeping is the responsibility of all Member States, whether they contribute troops and personnel or not. We therefore urge all countries concerned to expedite the settlement of the assessments for peacekeeping due to the United Nations. And in turn, we urge the United Nations expeditiously and fully to settle the amounts or arrears outstanding to Member countries for their participation in peacekeeping operations.

As I stated previously, international security has many dimensions. The security of the world's indigenous peoples is one such dimension. The history of the world's indigenous peoples is replete with wholesale slaughter, genocide and, in some cases, total annihilation during the era of exploration, discovery and colonization.

The Prime Minister of Fiji, the Honourable Sitiveni Rabuka, told the United Nations last year that it:

> "must guarantee that external values and forces do not continue to coerce political concessions, economic reforms and social changes not desired by indigenous peoples themselves". *(Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session, Plenary Meetings, 40th meeting, p. 49)*

At the opening of the regional workshop on the draft United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples held in Fiji last month, the Prime Minister of Fiji declared that:

> "In our Pacific home, we have been sole proprietors in most places for no less than three thousand years; in most other places, for much longer."

Our Prime Minister stated that it must be legally accepted that:

> "We are the first settlers, first dwellers or proprietors of our land. Secondly, we are a collective group that was imposed upon by uninvited external forces who disrupted the normal march of our history. As victims of what continues to be described as imperialism and colonialism, we cannot, in our quest for freedom, allow the vestiges of foreign domination to encroach upon us, either through internal machinations or external collusion."

The Fiji workshop agreed in principle that, wherever possible, efforts to strengthen the text of the current draft declaration should be encouraged. The unanimous view of the workshop was that efforts by States to undermine the existing language of the draft should be actively resisted by indigenous peoples. The workshop further resolved that Pacific indigenous peoples should seek to promote greater support for the draft declaration within the United Nations system so that the overall objective of achieving an effective and meaningful declaration on indigenous peoples is reached.

My country, which has had a multiracial population for the last 150 years, warmly welcomes the observance of the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People. We strongly urge, during the International Decade, the adoption of the declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. My country believes that the declaration should not be the alpha and the omega of indigenous rights, but should be merely a first step towards the negotiation, under the auspices of the United Nations, of a comprehensive legal convention on the rights of indigenous peoples.

Tension and fears among the indigenous people in Fiji led to the military overthrow of the Government in 1987 and the promulgation of a new Constitution in 1990 by an interim Government. That Constitution provided indigenous Fijians majority representation in Parliament. That Constitution was reviewed by a three-member commission headed by Sir Paul Reeves of New Zealand. After over 12 months of review, the commission recently submitted its report and recommendations to the Government. The Government has duly submitted the report to Parliament and a Select Committee, comprising representatives of all the political parties in Parliament, has been appointed to consider the Commission's report and recommendations.

Lasting peace and security in our world has been an illusion for the greater part of this century. With the new global changes, with our recent adoption of the CTBT, with rising optimism regarding the Conference on Disarmament, with what can be perceived as a genuine desire for peace, and with more meaningful international collaboration in the areas of economic cooperation and development, there is some hope for achieving lasting peace and security in our world.

The Acting President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Planning and Environment of Seychelles, Her Excellency Mrs. Danielle de St. Jorre.

Mrs. de St. Jorre (Seychelles) (*interpretation from French*): The course of history appears to unwind rapidly and with it, events occur, pass or recede into time, imbuing the lives of our societies with the dual sensation of dizzying progress and desperately slow evolution. It is essential for people to live in harmony and to face, with a feeling of unity, goodwill and sharing, the great challenges which they could not overcome alone. That is why we are gathered here. We believe that, without each other, we are weak and vulnerable and that in order to live better, it is essential that we be able to share and work together.

Upon reflection, however, it becomes more and more clear that some of the countries that are developing more rapidly, thanks to the advantages of technological and scientific progress, are losing interest in those still struggling to survive and still facing economic difficulties, food shortages and problems of health and education. To all this can be added other, equally serious evils: the effects of drugs, alcoholism, criminal behaviour and prostitution in all its forms.

In our international forums we often speak of security, of action to combat international terrorism and of the war on organized crime. Just recently, we were talking about working together against paedophilia. These are such horrible, painful things, but unfortunately so characteristic of our times.

So how can we not strongly condemn these attacks on human security and dignity? But it is even more important that our rejection of these crimes affecting the world be felt with the same degree of intensity, regardless of the country where they are committed — especially when some countries lack the means to combat the crimes. Should not the spirit of solidarity imply a concern for the well-being and security of all the inhabitants of the world? Should not each and every nation shed its selfish, hypocritical attitudes?

By not seeing further than our own interests, we treat others as our lowly tools. And yet we are well aware that feelings of frustration and injustice are the source of so much violence which so frequently plunges the world into mourning and makes people fear for their security. Therefore, if we want to world to develop harmoniously, we must break the bonds of this indolent selfishness in which people see everything around them through the prism of self-satisfaction.

If the existence of the United Nations is now threatened and if serious problems are undermining it and weakening the international community, it is precisely because the strongest partners will not agree to adopt the rules that govern any family, in which everyone's opinions are heard and discussed and the strong support and help the weak.

Instead, what do we observe? The most-favoured nations seem to carry little about and refuse resolutely to address the realities handicapping the developing countries. Calculations, assessments, criteria are separated into categories, mechanically, as if nations and peoples can be reduced to mere statistics. It must be said that the generous efforts of some rich countries, while helping developing countries, also benefit, one way or another, directly and indirectly, the stingiest countries.

Are we still seeking justice, equality and sustainable development throughout the world? In any case, the image the world projects of itself does not reflect these ideals, but rather two poles spinning further and further apart: the pole of wealth and the pole of poverty. It's not that there has been a lack of international meetings, at the highest levels, to try to find more effective solutions to reduce the level of poverty, increase the equity of trade and so forth. But it seems that, with each meeting, these problems get worse.

The firm ground of progress is crumbling under the feet of the developing countries and their future — given their current relations with the Powers holding the reins of the global economy — seems quite uncertain. This is especially true for the small island developing States like the Seychelles, whose only resources are the precarious revenues of tourism, which is subject to so many vicissitudes, and fishing. Their meagre resources, pumped into a network of tremendous competition, require them to make titanic efforts. Like many other countries whose territories were long exploited by a great Power and then suffered the repercussions of being suddenly abandoned without compensation, the Seychelles' economy is even more vulnerable than it was before being buffeted by this phenomenon.

As they do every year, many speakers have underscored the importance of preserving the environment in the context of sustainable development. The President of the United States himself underscored this fact:

(spoke in English)

> "Our planet is safer because of our common efforts to close Chernobyl, to address the challenges of climate change, to protect the world's forests and oceans. Now we must uphold our duty as custodians of our environment so that our children will inherit an even healthier planet." *(Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-first Session, Plenary Meetings, 6th meeting, p. 14)*

(spoke in French)

And, at the annual meeting of the Bretton Woods institutions, United States Vice-President Albert Gore Jr. also made this point.

(spoke in English)

> "But it also means giving greater attention to broad issues that I firmly believe must shape and inform everything we do in our quest for equitable and sustainable global prosperity. The first of these is a commitment to sustainable development and our environment. We now know with perfect clarity that

economic development and growth cannot ignore ecological realities. We know that investments that genuinely reduce poverty in an equitable and enduring way are investments that take their environmental implications fully into account. Not only is such an approach consistent with our development objectives, but it will also be much more cost effective. Win-win situations are not always available, but this is one of them and it is available."

(spoke in French)

And yet, many of our countries, although their survival depends on the entire world preserving the environment, find themselves left by the wayside when certain great Powers — having no further need of the hospitality of their shores for their military or other installations — light-heartedly depart, leaving behind them a trail of debris and other things and leaving it up to the countries themselves to do the rest. As for the damages and costs — let's not talk about them.

As for the reforms of the institutions of the United Nations system, the Seychelles is in favour of all proposals aimed at improving the representation of the smaller States in our work. We believe that the international community must hear our voices, understand us and deal with the specifics of our situation. Furthermore, to be more objective, the assessment criteria now being massively applied to all the developing countries, which require more focused attention, should be re-examined in the light of the vulnerability index. The index is too easily ignored, but is nonetheless very important in the establishment of the objective data defining the profile of any given country.

The fashion for what is commonly called "democracy" is sweeping the surface of the earth, and one of the principal criteria which the developed countries — democracy's self-appointed guarantors — use for deciding eligibility for development assistance is the establishment of a democratic system. Shouldn't that respectable institution, democracy, be manifest within the Organization itself when it elects a competent and honest leader in whom to duly vest its authority? In seeking to impose its logic by one way or another, in seeking to make its choice the majority's choice, we are far from honouring the principle on which democracy is founded: majority rule. In other words, for a matter such as the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Secretary-General, we should better gauge the pros and cons, leaving aside those which may seem a little too individualistic. We must be able to accept, particularly if qualifications justify it, the choice of the majority of the Members of this eminently democratic institution: the United Nations.

To conclude, I express my best wishes for greater concord in the future of the United Nations, which represents the voice and the will of the peoples of the world, so that the endeavour to which so much effort and generosity has been devoted may produce decisions and actions that will create for all the children, women and men of the Earth a way of life in which relations become more humane and thus more conducive to the advent of a harmonious global society.

The Acting President: I now call on the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ghana, His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas.

Mr. Chambas (Ghana): My delegation wishes to express its satisfaction and joy in seeing Mr. Razali Ismail preside over the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. His unanimous election is an honour to him personally and also to his country, Malaysia, with which Ghana has forged very warm and special relations. We have no doubt that his sterling qualities and long record of distinguished service to his Government and the international community will stand him in good stead in leading this Assembly to a successful conclusion of its work.

To his predecessor, Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral of Portugal, we wish to express our appreciation for the able manner in which he led us through very difficult negotiations during his presidency.

Our Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, has demonstrated, through his indefatigable energy and commitment to the independence and well-being of the United Nations, that he is up to the challenges that lie ahead of us in seeking to revitalize this Organization for the twenty-first century.

It was only a year ago that we celebrated with fanfare the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of our Organization. The world leaders assembled in this Assembly at that time once again rededicated themselves to achieving the visions embodied in the Charter of our Organization and fulfilling its goals and objectives, which serve the largest interests of humanity. We have gathered here again this year to take stock of developments since our last meeting and to renew, through various decisions and resolutions, our commitment to the promotion of peace and prosperity for our mutual benefit.

The end of the cold war provides us with a golden opportunity to work earnestly in pursuit of the international community's desire for general and complete disarmament — including nuclear disarmament — to be achieved under effective international control. Through the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and nuclear-weapon-free zones, most of us non-nuclear-weapon States are making our contributions in this respect. My Government is in the process of ratifying the Pelindaba Treaty, of which we are a proud signatory, and we appreciate the support of the non-nuclear and nuclear-weapon States for that Treaty. However, such zones can only be given meaning by the nuclear-weapon States' genuinely accepting the need for the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons within a given time-frame. It is with this in view that my country voted in favour of the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and signed it, despite its shortcomings. We see the Treaty as a first step in the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons in the world.

We also join the Non-Aligned Movement in urging all nuclear-weapon States to conclude an international instrument that would offer unconditional and legally binding assurances to all non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. This will enable all States subscribing to international instruments on non-proliferation to cooperate freely and unconditionally in the application of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes.

We will also continue to urge that more attention be paid to conventional armaments and to efforts to enhance international cooperation to curtail and eventually prohibit the use of anti-personnel land-mines and other inhumane weapons, which continue to inflict untold damage and hardship on innocent people long after the conflicts in which they were deployed have ended. Similar attention should be given to international cooperation in curbing illicit transfers of arms. Success in this field will go a long way towards curtailing the availability of weapons, which feed the numerous conflicts we have had to contend with in recent years, to drug traffickers and terrorists.

Internal strife within States, nurtured by racial and religious intolerance, and the resort to arms for the settlement of disputes threaten the very existence of a number of States in diverse regions of the world. In all of these States, the intransigence of warlords poses serious challenges to the capacity of the international community in general and the United Nations in particular to meet their responsibilities with regard to the maintenance of international peace and security. We have seen this in the former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Somalia, Rwanda, Burundi, Angola, Liberia and Haiti. The efforts made so far to deal with these conflicts are laudable, but more needs to be done.

That is what we are doing in West Africa, despite the recent setbacks suffered from the attacks on forces of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) in December 1995 and the outbreak of fighting in Monrovia in April and May 1996. Though the implementation of the programme for the disarmament and demobilization of the fighters, their reinsertion into normal civil life and the holding of democratic elections in Liberia, as set out in the Abuja Agreement, are now behind schedule, the meeting of the ECOWAS Committee of Nine on Liberia, in August 1996 in Abuja, saw the Liberian factional leaders renew once again their support for the peace process and their pledges to cooperate with the efforts to bring the Abuja Agreement back on track. Thus far we have been able to restore the capital, Monrovia, to its status as a safe haven and reinstate the Council of State and the Liberian National Transitional Government. The ceasefire between the warring factions in the country has remained largely respected, although there are still disturbing reports of hostilities between some of the factions.

We do appreciate the assistance of some individual countries to ECOMOG, as well as the cooperation of the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia, but we wish to stress once again that these modest forms of support are grossly inadequate, viewed against the enormity of the tasks in Liberia and the present state of the economies of ECOWAS member States. The Liberian factional leaders are tired of the war. The subregion has been able to broker peace amongst them, but it lacks the means to provide the resources to implement the peace accord. The international community should respond to the call for resources now or run the risk of the situation deteriorating once again. We shall not tire of reminding the international community that this Organization, the Security Council in particular, bears the ultimate responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. Regional or subregional efforts like ours can only complement, not substitute for, those of the international community, which must face its responsibilities more seriously in Liberia.

For our part, we in Ghana have endeavoured over the years to play the role assigned to us within the limits of our resources in meeting our common responsibilities

towards the maintenance of international peace and security. Since our participation in the United Nations peacekeeping operations in the Belgian Congo — now Zaire — in the 1960s, Ghana has been present in almost all the continents where United Nations peacekeeping duties call, and we are indeed proud of our contribution to these international peace efforts.

On the threshold of the twenty-first century, we cannot hide our amazement that some people and their God-given territories remain under colonial or alien domination and foreign occupation. Even more astonishing is the fact that some otherwise democratic, administering countries and colonial Powers fail to recognize the inalienable right of the administered or colonial peoples to self-determination, and they fail to recognize that colonial domination is among the worst forms of violations of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of colonial peoples.

It is therefore no accident that we should be gravely concerned at the continuing lack of progress on the question of Western Sahara. Despite all of its shortcomings, the settlement plan agreed to by the parties to the Western Sahara problem, under the auspices of this Organization, remains the best option for pursuing a long-lasting solution in the interest of the Saharan people. We remain concerned that the identification process has had to be suspended and the Identification Commission withdrawn as a result of the failure of the parties to agree on some relevant important procedures and modalities. To break the stalemate, dialogue is essential, and we once more call on the Assembly to encourage the principal parties to the conflict to engage, under the auspices of the United Nations, in direct talks that can open the way for the continuation of the identification process. Urgent attention and action is required to bring to an end the present unacceptable situation, which poses a veritable threat to subregional, regional and wider international security.

In a similar vein, we take this opportunity to reaffirm our unflinching support for the Middle East Peace Process initiated at the Madrid Peace Conference in 1991 and culminating in the Oslo accords. Over the past five years, several gains have been made, giving rise to hopes that a just and comprehensive peace in the region is attainable that would take cognizance of the legitimate right to self-determination of the Palestinian people and their right to an independent state. We therefore see the recent outbreak of violence in the area as a set-back to those laudable efforts and as a reflection of a growing mistrust on the part of the parties. We call on them to honour all their commitments under the agreements reached and to bring the peace process back on track. In this connection we welcome the efforts of the United States Administration to bring the parties together once more.

I should like at this juncture to refer to the question of the United Nations sanctions imposed on Libya. The Organization of African Unity (OAU), the League of Arab States and the Non-Aligned Movement, which represent the vast majority of States and peoples of the world, have been calling for some years now for the sanctions on Libya to be lifted. Our call for dialogue and negotiations that could lead to an acceptable solution of the dispute between Libya and the three permanent members of the Security Council, as well as proposals for a fair trial of the two suspects in The Hague, by Scottish judges and under Scottish law, have not elicited the expected response. Let it not be construed that our calls are based merely on sentimental considerations of regional solidarity. After careful examination of the facts as made known to the international community, and with due respect for the tenets of international law, we think that the three States concerned need to reciprocate the flexibility shown by the Libyan authorities and help to bring to a close an issue that has unjustifiably caused untold suffering to the innocent people of Libya. Issues of this nature justify our support for the establishment of an international criminal court for the promotion and maintenance of international criminal justice on a fair and equitable basis.

The relics of the cold war in international relations remain particularly on the Korean peninsula and in United States-Cuba relations. We believe that the four-party talks proposed to ease tension on the Korean peninsula should foster dialogue, understanding and cooperation among all the countries concerned and enhance the process aimed at the eventual unification of the two Koreas. With regard to United States-Cuba relations, we hope that the blockades and mutual exchanges of rhetoric will give way to a new era of dialogue and mutual respect, in tune with current trends in international relations.

As has been eloquently stated by the Secretary-General in his Agenda for Peace, there can be no development without peace, just as there can be no peace without development. We are convinced that we need to pursue development as a means of preventing most of the conflicts, tragedies and humanitarian disasters that confront the world today. We are enjoined under the Charter of the United Nations to

"employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples".

The need for concerted international action to restructure the international economy; construct a new regime to guide trade, aid and resource flows; and address the problems posed by environmental degradation, population explosion, the debt overhang, abject poverty and disease in developing countries, cannot be overemphasized. Such measures would redress the existing global economic inequalities and eradicate poverty in a way that will engender the peace and security that we all so dearly need. As expected, the series of global conferences held recently under the auspices of the United Nations, which involved not only Governments but also non-governmental organizations, civil society, the media and the private sector, have raised awareness of and built consensus around a number of overarching issues concerning economic growth and sustainable development. The time has come to shift into implementation gear and invest the same political will and energy in the monitoring of the follow-up process. We want to safeguard the environment and the welfare of our children, eradicate poverty, ensure sustainable development, and mainstream gender concerns in all our activities at the national and international levels, so that women and men participate fully and equally in all spheres of life as we approach the new dawn.

It bears mentioning that Africa's socio-economic difficulties are further compounded by the twin processes of globalization and liberalization. Africa therefore needs the special attention of the international community to ensure that the profound economic and institutional reforms it is undertaking to create an enabling environment for development yield maximum benefit for its people. The launching of the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for Africa in March 1996, if fully implemented, would contribute meaningfully to this endeavour.

We are painfully aware that international financial support for Africa is insufficient and unreliable. It is therefore necessary for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Africa to focus on the enhancement and strengthening of Africa's subregional economic groupings, which will serve as building blocks for an African economic community. This in turn will ensure Africa's effective participation in the emerging global economic order that is increasingly being shaped by the forces of globalization and economic liberalization.

For our part, we in Ghana are coping, not without difficulty, with the challenges posed by these forces, including those that are concomitant with the structural adjustment programmes that we have pursued for well over a decade. Coupled with these are those other imperatives that come with the processes of democratization and good governance. Our democratically elected Government will present itself to the electorate on 7 December 1996 to seek a fresh mandate to continue with the policies that have ensured stability and development in our country in recent years.

The entry into force of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea is a welcome development, and we fully appreciate the numerous efforts and various compromises that contributed immensely to putting into place the various organs of the International Seabed Authority. We hope that adequate resources will be made available to enable developing countries to utilize fully the benefits, and also discharge the responsibilities, deriving from the Convention.

The financial situation of our Organization remains precarious and a source of concern to my delegation. The crunch in the cash-flow situation has not changed for the better, principally because a number of countries, including some of the largest, are neither paying their contributions nor making good on their arrears. It is important for Member States to provide the United Nations system with the means and resources required to accomplish the tasks assigned to it. Support for the United Nations should manifest itself not only in an eagerness to restructure it to make it more effective, but also in the payment in full, on time and without conditions of assessed contributions, in order to promote the successful pursuit of the objectives of the Organization at a time of both challenge and opportunity. In addressing the cash-flow situation, we also wish to deplore the high degree of wastage and overlap in the system, especially during the start-up and liquidation phases of peacekeeping operations as well as in the proliferation of mandates. With the consolidation of the internal oversight mechanisms into the Office of Internal Oversight Services, coupled with the existing external oversight mechanisms, it is hoped that the financial functioning of the Organization will be more cost-effective.

I should like to conclude by reaffirming my delegation's support for the reforms currently being pursued by the United Nations. In our view, the reforms in the financial administration of the Organization, the revitalization of its economic and social structures, the strengthening of the General Assembly and the Secretariat, and the restructuring of the Security Council all should contribute to a better functioning United Nations suited for the challenges ahead of us as we enter the new millennium.

The meeting rose at 5.45 p.m.